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# **Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea (Republic of Korea)**

## **No 1562**

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### **Official name as proposed by the State Party**

Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea

### **Location**

Yangsan City, Gyeongsangnam-do Province  
Yeongju City, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province  
Andong City, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province  
Boeun County, Chungcheongbuk-do Province  
Gongju City, Chungcheongnam-do Province  
Suncheon City, Jeollanam-do Province  
Haenam County, Jeollanam-do Province  
Republic of Korea

### **Brief description**

Sansa are Buddhist mountain monasteries located throughout the southern provinces of the Korean Peninsula. Seven temples established in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries have been selected to represent these ancient and continuing centres of spiritual practice. The temples have historical associations with different schools of Buddhist thought and contain many individually notable historic structures, objects and documents, shrines and halls. The spatial arrangements demonstrate common traits that are distinctive to Korea - the 'madang' (open yard), surrounded by four buildings (Buddha Hall, pavilion, lecture hall and dormitory), all set within their natural mountain topography. The mountain monasteries have survived to the present as living centres of faith and daily practice despite centuries of suppression during the Joseon Dynasty, and the impacts of Japanese invasion in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Category of property**

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of seven *sites*.

## **1 Basic data**

### **Included in the Tentative List**

12 December 2013

### **International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination**

None

### **Date received by the World Heritage Centre**

26 January 2017

### **Background**

This is a new nomination.

### **Consultations**

ICOMOS consulted several independent experts.

### **Technical Evaluation Mission**

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 10 to 17 September 2017.

### **Additional information received by ICOMOS**

A letter was sent to the State Party on 5 October 2017 requesting additional information on the selection of components, specificities of Korean Buddhism and local beliefs; development projects; concepts of restoration; consultation with local communities; Heritage Impact Assessment processes; and the coordination of management between provincial and national government agencies.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 12 January 2018 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel. Further information was requested in the Interim Report, including: further clarification of the distinctiveness of Korean Buddhism; selection of the components of the serial property; the arguments based on 'head temples'; expansion of the comparative analysis; visitor pressure and carrying capacity; approvals processes for new works; and current status of the 5-year Conservation and Management Plan and the Tourism Development Master Plan.

Consultation meetings occurred between ICOMOS and representatives of the State Party to discuss these issues on 23 November 2017 and 20 February 2018.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 6 November 2017 and 26 February 2018 and has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

### **Date of ICOMOS approval of this report**

14 March 2018

## **2 The property**

### **Description of the Serial Nomination**

The nominated serial property comprises seven Buddhist mountain monasteries which were established between the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Korean Peninsula. The selected components are associated with the Vinaya School, the Avatamsaka School, the Dharmalaksana School and the Seon School, covering the major schools of Mahayana Buddhism prevailing in the Korean Peninsula.

The seven sites total 55.43ha and each is surrounded by a buffer zone. The State Party considers that the nominated temples demonstrate typical aspects of the architectural layout of Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries, such as the arrangement of buildings within the natural topography,

and the spatial configuration of the 'madang' (open yard), surrounded by four buildings (Buddha Hall, pavilion, lecture hall and dormitory). The nominated temples are located in mountains, within relatively pristine natural settings.

The temples and their specific elements are described in detail by the State Party, including maps showing the layout and surrounding topography. Within the seven nominated components, there are 81 individually-designated heritage elements identified by the State Party.

#### *Tongdosa Temple (Temple of the Mastery of Truth)*

This well-known temple is the centre of Vinaya Buddhism, and comprises an area of 7.87 ha, with a buffer zone of 84.14 ha. The temple was founded in 646 by Vinaya Master Jajang who introduced the school to Korea. The spatial scale of the temple reached its current form in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike the other nominated components, Tongdosa Temple does not enshrine an image of the Buddha, because there are relics of the Buddha enshrined in the Diamond Precept Platform. The temple has facilities for all three forms of monastic teaching (meditation, doctrinal study and monastic discipline) – and includes a Seon training centre, monastic academy and Vinaya seminary. Each of the three main areas has its own 'madang' and main hall.

#### *Buseoksa Temple (Floating Rock Temple)*

Established in 676 by Great Master Uisang, patriarch of the Hwaem (Avatamsaka) school in Korea, Buseoksa is the historical and present day centre of worship of Amitabha. It comprises an area of 7.08 ha, with a buffer zone of 47.09 ha and features a series of terraces. It reached its current form in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The 13<sup>th</sup> century Hall of Infinite Life is one of the oldest buildings in Korea and an important example of East Asian wooden architecture.

#### *Bongjeongsa Temple (Phoenix Dwelling Temple)*

Established in 677 by Neungin, a disciple of the Great Master Uisang, Bongjeongsa combines both Sakyamuni and Amitabha beliefs. It comprises an area of 5.30 ha, with a buffer zone of 75.05 ha. The temple reached its current form in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Assembly of the Infinite Sea and the Pavilion of Eternity were built. The temple features a Seon meditation hall and Avatamsaka Lecture Hall. Constructed on terraces, Bongjeongsa Temple has two main yards and two main halls that date to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Vegetable gardens within the temple grounds are cultivated by the monks and lay believers.

#### *Beopjusa Temple (Dharma Abode Temple)*

Founded in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century by Vinaya Master Jinpyo and his disciple Yeongsim, Beopjusa Temple comprises an area of 11.22 ha, with a buffer zone of 190.03 ha. Jinpyo established the Korean Beopsang school, characterised by repentance and belief in Maitreya. A large 20<sup>th</sup> century statue of Maitreya stands within the temple, along with some older associated stone features. Quickly restored after its destruction in the Japanese invasions of Korea, Beopjusa gained its current scale and composition in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and demonstrates the close interactions between the Joseon Dynasty royal court and Buddhism.

#### *Magoksa Temple (Hemp Valley Temple)*

Founded in the late-9<sup>th</sup> century, Magoksa is a stronghold of Sakyamuni worship, and comprises an area of 3.91 ha, with a buffer zone of 62.66 ha. There are two main areas, separated by a stream. Repaired following damage in the Japanese invasions of Korea, Magoksa Temple gained its current spatial composition in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### *Seonamsa Temple (Immortal's Rock Temple)*

Founded in the late-9<sup>th</sup> century, this temple of the Seon school comprises an area of 9.67 ha, with a buffer zone of 246.16 ha. The temple is for the worship of Sakyamuni, and contains four separate areas. Reconstructed several times following its destruction by the Japanese invasions of Korea and later fires, Seonamsa Temple gained its current spatial composition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and is a centre for monk education. Tea fields are located at the rear of the temple complex.

#### *Daeheungsa Temple (Great Rise Temple)*

Founded in the late-9<sup>th</sup> century, this temple of the Seon school for the worship of Sakyamuni comprises an area of 10.38 ha, with a buffer zone of 617.98 ha. It features the 18<sup>th</sup> century Pyochungsa Hall, built to honour the Great Master Seosan who contributed to the defence against the Japanese invasions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Confucian and Buddhist rites are held there. Daeheungsa Temple features several Seon meditation centres and House of Maitreya, and gained its current spatial composition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For each of the nominated components, the State Party describes a rich array of annual festivals, rites and continuing spiritual practices at the temples, including some that incorporate local belief systems (such as shrines dedicated to the Mountain Spirit, longevity totems associated with Taoism and Shamanism, buildings and other elements that commemorate patriarchs, etc).

### **History and development**

The State Party has provided a detailed history of each of the nominated components, including timelines that show major periods of new constructions and restorations.

Buddhism began in India and quickly spread across the Asian continent. It was introduced to Korea via China in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. Initially Buddhist temples were built in the city centres. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Three Kingdoms of Korea were united by Silla, and the first mountain monasteries were established, founded by different schools of religious philosophy at Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Bongjeongsa and Beopjusa temples, and Buddhism became a religion of the masses. Seon Buddhism – which places emphasis on self-realisation through meditation – spread from China and through Korea in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the foundation of Magoksa, Seonamsa and Daeheungsa temples. Each of these monasteries has operated since their establishment to the present day.

The Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) designated Buddhism as a state religion, and the centralised governing system was based on both Confucian and Buddhist thought (including

both Seon and Gyo schools). Despite their origins in the Silla period, much of the architecture of the nominated components represents developments in the later Goryeo and Joseon periods.

During the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) Confucianism was promoted as a ritual and symbolic means of asserting the legitimacy of the court. Although many members of the royal family, particularly women, were Buddhists, Buddhism was suppressed and the court ceased to patronise monasteries. The number of monasteries and their land assets were greatly reduced during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and mountain monasteries became the lifeblood of Korean Buddhism.

Japanese invasions (1592-1598) severely damaged a number of the mountain monasteries. In some cases, monks were instrumental in repelling the Japanese, partially fueling a revival of Buddhism in Korea. The damaged and destroyed temple structures were rebuilt from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The monastery education system became established in Korea from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The spatial layout of the temples was altered (in part, to provide larger spaces for Buddhist rituals); and some of the designated heritage elements within the nominated components were built in this period. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the monasteries grew to even larger scales, and buildings evolved into more complex forms.

Legends and narrative traditions associate six of the seven nominated monasteries with eminent monks of the Silla period of Korean history. Tongdosa was founded in 646 by the Silla monk Jajang; and Buseoksa and Bongjeongsa were founded by the Silla monk Uisang from 676. Both Jajang and Uisang were proponents of the Avatamsaka school (known as Hwaom in Korean), and evidence of the importance of this Avatamsaka tradition is found at Buseoksa, Bongjeongsa, and Beopjusa temples.

Of the seven selected mountain monasteries, Tongdosa and Buseoksa are the most well-known and have the oldest structures. According to tradition, the Precepts Platform at Tongdosa temple contains a relic of the historical Buddha brought to Silla by Jajang as a gift from Tang China. Research by art historians, has shown that the current building was probably completed or at least significantly renovated during the Goryeo period. Buseoksa's Hall of Infinite Life, constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century is the oldest extant wooden building in Korea, and contains a molded clay image of the Buddha Amitaabha that probably dates from the late Silla period. Beopjusa contains a large multi-storey wooden pavilion which is the largest in Korea. Although more common in other parts of East Asia, there are few extant examples of this kind of architecture in Korea.

The monasteries selected for the World Heritage nomination all trace their histories back to the earliest era of Buddhism on the Korean Peninsula, and survived the suppression of Buddhism during the Joseon Dynasty as

well as the impacts of the Japanese Hideyoshi invasion of Korea at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The monastic buildings and the reclusive contemplative and scholarly vocations have remained substantially intact and in use to the present. They have therefore witnessed the historical evolution of the Buddhism in the Korean Peninsula.

### **3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity**

#### **Comparative analysis**

The comparative analysis has been presented by the State Party on two different levels. The first is to compare Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries with other Buddhist properties on the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists; and the second aims to justify the selection of the seven nominated components from within all of Korea's extant Buddhist mountain monasteries. These are briefly considered in turn below.

Firstly, the State Party provided a table comparing the nominated property with 48 World Heritage properties that are associated with Buddhism, plus several Tentative List properties. Many of these are archaeological sites today, and no longer function as religious facilities. Others represent different schools of Buddhism than the Mahayana traditions of East Asia. As a result of these distinctions, the properties most directly comparable are found in mountainous areas of China, Japan and North Korea, and also Vietnam and Central Asia. These are compared with the "Sansa" in more detail by the State Party, identifying distinctions in their histories, spatial and locational arrangements, monastic traditions and the influences of other faiths.

ICOMOS notes that these east and southeast Asian Buddhist properties on the World Heritage List are located in areas of natural beauty, where monastic structures have been maintained for millennia and continue to support active Buddhist practices. Mountain monasteries are common in Buddhism throughout the world: as noted by the State Party, there are 785 in the Republic of Korea; and at Mount Wutai (China) alone there are 68 monasteries located on 5 mountain tops. Although the State Party has identified individual elements that relate to local spiritual practices at each of the nominated temples, ICOMOS notes that, in many respects, the Korean sites exhibit less admixture with other religious practices, such as Taoism in China or Shintoism in Japan.

Additional Information provided by the State Party further extended the comparative analysis to include consideration of sites in India, Myanmar and Pakistan. Some of these sites – such as components of the Ajanta Caves (India) are inscribed in the World Heritage List; and others, such as Bagan in Myanmar are included in Tentative Lists. The State Party has briefly explained the different historical contexts, and the use of stupas and other forms that characterise these additional comparisons.

ICOMOS acknowledges the enormity of the comparative context for sites of Buddhist spiritual practice (according to various distinct schools and traditions). ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis has included the most relevant comparisons, showing the contrasts and continuities across the wider geo-cultural region.

For the second comparative analysis task, the State Party provided a table of 25 mountain monastery sites within Korea to demonstrate the basis for the selection of the seven nominated components. These 25 sites were drawn from a total of 952 Buddhist Temples in Korea, of which 82% (or 785) are located in mountain areas. Of the 785 mountain monasteries, only 63 possess state-designated cultural properties (outstanding paintings, sculptures, buildings and literary works); and of these, only 25 were founded between the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries and have sound sources of historical information about their establishment and continuity to the present.

The State Party asserts that the seven selected temples have maintained the 'archetypes of Sansa', while also responding to historical changes, and continuing to fulfil their religious functions. They differ from the others on the list of 25 temples because they operate Seon meditation centres and demonstrate integrity in relation to their spatial lay-out. The selected monasteries represent Mahayana Buddhism during its early development in Korea, including the Hwaeom, Beopsang, Gyeyul and Seon schools.

Questions about the selection of the components have been a focus of exchanges with the State Party and have been the key issue of concern for ICOMOS. The Additional Information provided by the State Party clarified the characteristics used for the selection of the components: mountain locations, designation as a traditional temple in national law, possession of state-designated cultural properties, establishment in 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, continuing Seon meditation centres, credible sources for history, intact lay-out of central temple areas, and site-specific issues of authenticity and integrity. In a number of cases, temples were excluded by the State Party on the basis of changes and losses of elements that occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. ICOMOS considers that these characteristics are pertinent, but that they do not clearly address the proposed criteria for inclusion in the World Heritage List.

Additional information provided by the State Party has also clarified the justification of the inclusion of each of the seven components, based for the most part on their historical specificities. The State Party has also explained that the distribution of the seven components in different parts of the Republic of Korea demonstrates their distribution throughout the country. In discussions with the ICOMOS Panel, the State Party representatives suggested that the role of the seven components as 'head temples' was also a factor. ICOMOS did not consider this to be a convincing argument or consistently applied; and the State Party has subsequently confirmed that this is not a key factor in the selection.

ICOMOS also questioned the focus of the comparative analysis and other aspects of this nomination on the establishment of the 'madang' or central yard in the temple lay-outs, given that this feature is not only common, but virtually ubiquitous in Korean mountain monasteries.

In response to questions raised by ICOMOS, the State Party clarified the reasons for the exclusion of some other sites, which seemed potentially relevant to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. For example, ICOMOS queried why the selection included one (Tongdosa), but not the other two (Haeinsa and Songgwangsa) of the well-known Korean 'Three-Jewel Monasteries'. The State Party explained that Haeinsa (which is already inscribed on the World Heritage List) was excluded because its primary significance is associated with the early Joseon period, and there are no reliable sources for its use in the Goryeo period; and while Songgwangsa originated in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, its primary significance as a temple developed later, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The State Party also explained that Ssanggyesa, Bongamsa and Sudeoksa were excluded on the basis of changes to their original topography and lay-out of the central area of the temple. The State Party also explained that the temple at Hwaeomsa was excluded on the basis of insufficient historical sources during the Goryeo and early Joseon periods.

Finally, questions arise about the inclusion of some of the selected temples. Bongjeongsa has a smaller scale than the other six components and cannot be considered to be a 'comprehensive monastery'. In terms of their historical significance, Bongjeongsa, Magoksa, and Seonamsa are weaker.

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the additional information provided by the State Party has clearly explained its selection processes, and has assisted in better understanding the rationale of the serial nomination. However, ICOMOS considers that the justification for the seven components has not been strongly established in all cases.

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ICOMOS considers that comparative analysis of other World Heritage properties in Asia supports the potential for Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries to be included in the World Heritage List. However, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis of Buddhist monasteries within Korea has not justified the inclusion of all seven of the selected components in relation to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

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#### **Justification of Outstanding Universal Value**

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- Together the seven nominated components typologically epitomise the openness and spatial layout of Korean Buddhist mountain temples, and

their historical and continuing purposes as centres of belief, spiritual practice and daily life for monastic communities;

- The nominated Buddhist mountain monasteries illustrate various schools of Mahayana Buddhism, which was introduced to Korea from China from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries;
- Due to their remote locations, Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries were able to survive the policies of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) when the emphasis on Confucianism caused the closure of most urban temples, further enhancing the role of mountain monasteries within Korean Buddhism;
- The selected components demonstrate diverse local cultural influences, traditions and practices;
- The seven monasteries are found within three typological geographical contexts in their broader mountain settings: valley bottom, slope and streamside.

The serial approach is justified by the State Party in order to represent the most significant characteristics of the Buddhist mountain monasteries. These include variations in the spatial patterns, settings and distribution of functions, the diversity of the schools of Buddhism and the incorporation of local beliefs.

ICOMOS considers that the distinctive expression of Korean Buddhism could be articulated for the purposes of the World Heritage List, but that the initial reasons put forward by the State Party were not well defined. ICOMOS did not find the arguments about the distinctiveness of the spatial layout and 'madang' (rectangular yard) to be convincing because these are relatively common characteristics in Korea and elsewhere. Similarly, the arguments made concerning the geographical contexts are not a sufficient basis for the development of a typology; and while the documentation of the incorporation of local beliefs into the temples is of interest, ICOMOS does not consider that this is a basis for demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value.

Based on the dialogue with the State Party during the course of the evaluation and the additional information provided, ICOMOS concludes that the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated serial property rests on the specific intangible and historical aspects of Korean Buddhism. These relate to the long time-depth, continuity and survival of the mountain monasteries, and the ways in which historical legacies are reflected in temple management, and continuing traditions such as daily routines, education of monks, Seon meditative practices and doctrinal study. The spatial arrangements and elements within the monasteries reflect these, and also the requirements for the self-reliance of the monastic communities.

## Integrity and authenticity

### Integrity

The integrity of the serial nomination is presented on two levels. The first argues that the inclusion of seven temples ensures the ability of the serial property to convey its Outstanding Universal Value; and the second discusses the integrity of the individual temples included in the nomination.

On the second measure, the material presented by the State Party in the nomination dossier is comprehensive and demonstrates that the requirements of integrity are met for each of the individual temple components. In each case the important elements are present within the nominated boundary: they exhibit a good state of conservation, are protected and relatively free from threats. Religious practices are continuing, and the temple structures are well-preserved.

The first measure – concerning the justification of the selection of the components – is more complex, as discussed above. The seven nominated sites are considered by the State Party to be the most outstanding examples. Accordingly, the State Party considers that the seven components contain all the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries, including well-preserved buildings for religious practice and daily living, worship halls and shrines, meditation areas, monastic academy spaces and dormitories for monks. The settings of the monasteries are also important, and few pressures threaten them. The selected components are intact, free of major losses and alterations during the modern period, and retain their original functions, despite obvious changes through history.

ICOMOS considers that the seven selected components include some of the best preserved and most influential of Korea's Buddhist monasteries, and their national significance is evident. They demonstrate the historical and contemporary importance of Buddhism in Korea, continuing spiritual practices, and illustrate both common and distinct facets across the many extant temples. However, ICOMOS considers that this aspect of the requirements of integrity is not yet demonstrated for the entirety of the proposed series due to the issues summarised above. Although the rationale for the selection has been clearly explained by the State Party, it is weakly associated with the proposed criteria and Outstanding Universal Value.

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The conditions of integrity of the individual components have been met; however, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity of the series is justified only for some of the components.

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## Authenticity

The authenticity of the nominated property is based on the long and continuing uses of the components for Buddhist spiritual practices and rituals. The State Party asserts that authenticity is demonstrated through the dimensions of their use and function; location and setting; traditions, techniques and management skills; and intangible heritage. The architecture within the monasteries has been carefully maintained according to strict principles of repair and restoration, using traditional construction techniques, particularly for the major wooden architectural elements. Licensed experts and Cultural Heritage Repair Engineers and Technicians undertake this work under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage Administration.

The religious traditions and functions of the Buddhist temples maintain a high degree of authenticity. The major religious facilities include the Buddhist worship halls, the 'madang' (yards), the memorial halls of the founders, pagodas and some ancillary facilities. These demonstrate their original form, layout and design, despite historical changes to accommodate changes in Buddhist practices over time.

The reconstructions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century used traditional materials and techniques, and ICOMOS considers that these are consistent with the requirements of authenticity. As the nominated temples are all in use, the monks' daily living facilities and ancillary structures are subject to changes to meet different functions. Furthermore, the functions of some buildings have changed to support other modern-day operations of the temples, such as offices and shops.

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ICOMOS considers that the conditions of authenticity of the individual sites that comprise the series have been met.

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### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii) and (iv).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the monasteries are sacred places and provide an exceptional testimony to their long and continuing traditions of Buddhist spiritual practice.

ICOMOS considers that Buddhism has a long history that has traversed a number of historical eras in the Korean Peninsula, and that the mountain monasteries offer a distinctively Korean instantiation of Buddhist monastic culture from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been demonstrated for four of the seven nominated components (Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa, Daeheungsa).

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Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the group of monasteries demonstrate the spatial layout types of Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries, adapted to specific natural features. These typically contain a range of common buildings and spaces for rituals, spiritual practices and daily life, organised around 'madang' or open yard. The seven components are categorised by the State Party according to the characteristics of their locations.

ICOMOS notes the detailed descriptions of the spatial characteristics of the seven mountain monasteries. However, ICOMOS considers that the method for presenting the selection of the components does not set out a typological understanding of Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries, and the selection of the seven temples. ICOMOS considers that the emphasis by the State Party on the spatial feature of the 'madang' in Korean Sansa does not provide a sufficient typological basis for the application of this criterion; nor does the consideration of the differences in the topographic setting/location of each of the selected temples.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been demonstrated.

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ICOMOS considers that the serial approach is supported, but that the selection of the seven components has not been fully justified.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated components meet the requirements of integrity and authenticity, and that criterion (iii) has been demonstrated for four of the seven nominated components (Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa, Daeheungsa).

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### Description of the attributes

The attributes of the property are the four temples (Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa, Daeheungsa) and their natural settings, including: historical temple structures, elements and spaces; topography and temple lay-out; living quarters, gardens that support the daily routines of the monks and laity; spaces and structures for Buddhist education and meditative practices; and the continuing spiritual practices and religious functions.

## 4 Factors affecting the property

Because of the remote locations of the nominated components, there are few pressures identified by the State Party. Very few people live in or near to the nominated temples, and most inhabitants of the nominated components are monks and caretakers. Similarly, within the buffer zones, inhabitants are predominantly monks.

The nominated components have rarely been affected by natural disasters. Forest fire is the major threat, and there are fire detection/suppression systems and training in place. Termites are also a potential threat to the timber structures, and systematic monitoring is undertaken. Pine wilt disease affects some forest areas and is actively managed. These arrangements are detailed in the site-based Conservation Management Plans.

The component sites are not subject to development pressure. ICOMOS notes that some historical elements within the nominated components have been converted to new uses, such as the Pavilion of Eternity (Tongdosa Temple), converted to a souvenir shop; the Avatamsaka Lecture Hall (Bongjeongsa Temple), converted to an office; and the House of Sword Seekers (Magoksa Temple), partly converted to an office.

There are various new facilities for public access and interpretation located outside the component boundaries. For example, the Temple Stay of the Beopjusa Temple has been built according to traditional building scale and form, and is located across the stream from the Temple, with no visual impact. The Tea Gardens in the buffer zone of the Seonamsa Temple are separated from the temples by the mountain ranges, and have no impact upon the temple landscape. The temple museums are generally located close to the nominated areas but are not within their visual catchments.

ICOMOS notes that some intrusive elements have been removed from some of the nominated components and their buffer zones in the past, such as illegal buildings and a large signal antenna.

The State Party recognises that, in order to support their continuing uses, new facilities and modernisation works are needed from time to time for the accommodation and other facilities used by the monastic community. Additional information provided by the State Party explained that there are plans to build new structures at Magoksa Temple (to replace temporary shower facilities used by the monks); Daeheungsa Temple (a new one-storey building to symbolise the temple's historical role in national defence); and Beopjusa Temple (following current archaeological excavations to reveal the original position of the Sarira Pavilion, a new building may be constructed). Such projects are strictly regulated by the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act. ICOMOS recognises that facilities for worship and the everyday routines of the monks are important to the continuing spiritual uses of the nominated components, but considers that more guidance should be provided about future changes.

There is a village located in the buffer zone for Buseoksa Temple, which is not visible from the temple. Building heights in the village are limited to one storey. The processes for establishing the Standards for Permissible Alteration within the Cultural Heritage Protection Act require consultation with local residents. According to the additional information provided by the State Party, the

current standards have been in place since December 2009.

The State Party suggests that there is minimal visitor pressure at the seven nominated components, but that this is expected to increase following World Heritage inscription. Visitor numbers are provided in the nomination dossier, and range between 73,035 per year for Bongjeongsa Temple and 621,259 per year for Tongdosa Temple.

Carrying capacity has been calculated for each nominated component based on assumptions of the amount of space per person, and forms the basis of the visitor management arrangements. Entry by visitors is restricted to the Seon training centres and residential areas of the monks in order to safeguard the qualities of spaces for meditation and private activities. While carrying capacity is currently well-managed, ICOMOS notes that there are peak periods for visitation, and that further measures to manage congestion could be needed in order to maintain an appropriate atmosphere within these sites.

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ICOMOS considers that the main threat to the property is forest fire. Tourism growth could create pressures in the future. ICOMOS considers that new building construction projects within the temple complexes could have a potential impact on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated series.

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## **5 Protection, conservation and management**

### **Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone**

The boundaries of each of the nominated components are based on roads, valleys, streams and mountain slopes that adjoin the temple sites. Most nominated components include small sections of streams (other than Buseoksa Temple). In some cases, archaeological research has assisted in confirming the boundaries. While the mountains themselves are considered important for understanding the characteristics of the nominated sites, the settings are not included within the boundaries.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated components are appropriate. All significant elements are included within the boundaries, including the facilities needed for religious activities and to support the daily lives of the monks.

Each component is surrounded by a buffer zone based on the visual setting and following topographical characteristics such as mountain ridges. The buffer zones include the terrain and vegetation around the temples, providing necessary protection for the environment and landscapes associated with the nominated property.

The nominated components and their buffer zones are protected through the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act.

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ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property components and their buffer zones are appropriate.

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### **Ownership**

The land within each nominated temple is owned by the temple community, and the relevant streams and roads are owned by the state. There are small elements in private ownership within the boundaries of Buseoksa Temple and Bongjeongsa Temple (amounting to 0.36 ha and 0.43 ha respectively), which are a small section of road and a forested land parcel. The State Party has indicated its intentions to purchase these land parcels in the medium- to long-term.

The land within the buffer zones reflects a similar pattern of land ownership, with most owned by the temples themselves. Some private ownership exists in the buffer zones for Tongdosa Temple (0.23 ha), Buseoksa Temple (16.05 ha), Bongjeongsa Temple (12.46 ha) and Magoksa Temple (3.29 ha). All of these are within Historic and Cultural Environment Protection Areas under the Cultural Heritage Protection Act, with strict controls on development activities.

### **Protection**

The nominated components are all designated as Historic Sites under the Cultural Heritage Protection Act; and under City/Provincial Government Cultural Heritage Protection Ordinances. Modern constructions to facilitate continuing use and developments around the temples are strictly controlled.

Each temple has a number of elements that are designated as State-designated heritage (National Treasure, Treasure, Historic Site or Scenic Site); or City/Province-designated heritage (Tangible Cultural Heritage, Folklore Heritage, Cultural Heritage Material or Monument). The nomination dossier outlines the designation status of elements within each component.

The Cultural Heritage Protection Act also provides for the designation of Cultural Heritage Zones and Historical and Cultural Environment Protection Zones. These are in place for each of the nominated components and their buffer zones. The Cultural Heritage Protection Act applies within areas of 500-metres of the outer boundary of each Cultural Heritage Zone. Heritage Impact Assessments are prepared within the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act, and are submitted to state and provincial cultural heritage committees during development decision-making processes.

All of the nominated components are also protected by the Korean Traditional Temples Preservation and Support Act which legally protects the temples (including elements not designated by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act). This provides for the transmission of cultural heritage and cultural events. A number of further legal provisions are applicable to aspects of the protection and management of the nominated components including: the Landscape Act, Natural Parks Act, and Environmental Impact

Assessment Act, as well as various local and provincial ordinances for conservation and management of World Heritage.

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate.

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### **Conservation**

The nominated property components have been extensively documented and inventoried for the purposes of assessing their state of conservation and monitoring. The management offices of each temple keep the original records of the temple buildings, and reports on historical studies, surveys and repairs. These records provide a sound basis for academic research, repair, maintenance, protection, management and interpretation of the temples. Maintenance includes the regular repair and replacement of elements of wooden structures. In general, principles of minimal intervention, re-use of existing materials and restoration based on careful investigation and research are applied.

As part of Seon practice, monks carry out daily maintenance of the temples and ritual facilities under the supervision of the Chief Abbot of each temple; and the Laity Associations of the temples organise volunteers to carry out regular cleaning inside and around the temple. The State Party's cultural heritage research institutions have implemented routine maintenance and repair of the heritage elements identified in the temples in accordance with the principles outlined in the Cultural Heritage Protection Act.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated components exhibit a good state of conservation.

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### **Management**

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The components of the nominated property are managed through a series of government and community structures that operate at the national, provincial and local levels.

The 'Council for Inscription of Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea on the World Heritage List' was established through a Memorandum of Understanding in 2014 to develop the World Heritage nomination. The Council has been responsible for formulating conservation management plans and coordinating the protection, management, presentation and research of the nominated components. The Council has identified the specific responsibilities for the key organisations involved, including: religious organisations and chief abbots; the World Heritage Division of the Cultural Heritage Administration; the Office of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; and Cultural Heritage Divisions or the Cultural and Art Divisions of the provincial and municipal governments. A Steering Committee for the Council includes the heads of the 12 provincial/local governments, supported by a



Secretariat, an Executive Committee, Administrative Committee, Advisory Committee and an Experts Committee. There are 59 staff that work directly for the Council in addition to the monks, temple management staff, cultural heritage management staff and cultural tourism guides that work for the individual temples.

Should the nominated serial property be inscribed in the World Heritage List, the Council will become 'Sansa Conservation and Management', taking responsibility for the coordination and overall conservation strategy. A detailed structure of roles and responsibilities has been provided, along with a proposal for 40 staff for administration, conservation management, monitoring, research and promotion.

Traditional management is a strong factor for the nominated components. Each temple is under the responsibility of a chief abbot. The Cultural Affairs Department of the Administrative Headquarters of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism is responsible for the management of cultural heritage, and the development and implementation of related projects. The Office of each temple is responsible for the daily monitoring and management. While these offices are part of the temple, the salaries of the staff are provided by the Cultural Heritage Administration. The Laity Association of each temple participates in volunteer work to support Buddhist practices, maintaining the temple landscapes and cleaning the temples.

Funding for protection, maintenance and repairs to the temples and associated elements is derived from state allocations (70%), provincial government sources (15%) and from local government (15%). In the period between 2014-2016, a total budget of US\$22.07 million was provided for the conservation and management of the seven components of the nominated property, and the State Party has estimated that a budget of US\$32.5 million will be provided for the period 2018-2022 following the possible World Heritage inscription.

The national and provincial governments maintain emergency response operations for preparedness for natural threats and accidents, particularly forest fire. The temples are equipped with fire sensors, CCTV cameras and firefighting equipment.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

According to the Cultural Heritage Protection Act, the Cultural Heritage Administration is required to formulate comprehensive 5-year plans for the conservation and management of the nominated property in consultation with provincial governments. These set policy directions at the highest level. The most recent is for 2017-2021. Provincial governments develop annual plans to implement heritage projects in accordance with the national planning framework. Currently, these include initiatives for repairs and maintenance of the specific

elements of the nominated components, disaster prevention facilities, and enhanced support for Buddhist cultural heritage. Together the national and provincial plans provide the basis for the allocation of financial resources.

Cultural Heritage Maintenance Plans are established by the Cultural Heritage Administration. For most World Heritage sites, these are drawn up for a period of 6 years. Currently two of the seven nominated components have Cultural Heritage Maintenance Plans in place – Buseoksa Temple and Seonamsa Temple. The State Party has advised that these will be prepared for the remaining five components following their possible inscription in the World Heritage List from 2018-2020.

Various national and provincial/city plans for land use are also of relevance to the management of the nominated components.

The State Party has developed the 'Conservation and Management Plan for Sansa, Buddhist Monasteries in Korea' which provides for coordination between the different organisations and levels of government and community decision-making. Financial resources, risk preparedness, tourism and promotion, research and monitoring are included.

The Management Plan is complemented by individual plans for each temple that have been prepared by the Council for the Inscription of Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea on the World Heritage List. These comprehensively detail the management and conservation policies, including maintenance of wooden buildings and stone artefacts, landscape management issues, disaster prevention and tourism management.

Work on the nominated components must be carried out by people certified by the Cultural Heritage Administration as Cultural Heritage Repair Engineers or Cultural Heritage Repair Technicians. The Korea National University of Cultural Heritage provides the necessary training in a range of specialist fields; and the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage supports surveys, documentation and conservation treatments. The Central Buddhist Museum and the Research Institute of Buddhist Cultural Heritage (both established in 2007 by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism) support research, conservation treatments and public programs for Buddhist cultural properties.

While ICOMOS notes that there are strict regulations about works within the selected temples, better guidance for new construction, repair and other changes to the 'non-cultural-heritage' elements is needed.

Other than the living quarters of the monks, the seven nominated temples are all open to the public as places for Buddhism and religious practice. According to Buddhist rituals, the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdosa Temple is open to the public only at specific times of the year, but the adjoining Hall of the Great Hero has a

window on the back wall which allows the public to have a glimpse of it at other times. There are several famous scenic spots located within several of the nominated components, including Beopjusa Temple, Seonamsa Temple and Daeheungsa Temple.

Guiding is provided by a small number of permanently stationed guides at each temple, plus laity and volunteers. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism has a program for training cultural heritage guides which is implemented by local governments.

Visitor infrastructure is provided at each temple, include interpretation boards, ticket booths, information centres, and basic facilities for receiving guests, transport, on-site services, parking and so on. Lodging and dining facilities are usually located in nearby areas, away from the visual setting of the temples. Temple Stay programs are provided at the nominated temples, to enable visitors to directly participate in Buddhist activities and understand their meanings, including: meditation sessions, conversations with monks, monastic meals, various rituals for visitors and making paper lotus flower. Each of the nominated temples has a calendar of events for monks and visitors.

Each province has its own tourism development plan, framed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tourism Development Master Plan drawn up by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2017-2021). The Management Plan prepared by the Council for Inscription of Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea on the World Heritage List includes tourism management plans for the nominated components, and plans for the promotion and uses of each temple.

#### Involvement of the local communities

As noted above, involvement of local communities and opportunities for public participation are prominent components of the traditional operations of the nominated temples. ICOMOS notes that local residents participate in daily cleaning of the sites and their settings; patrolling and monitoring the sites; maintaining friendly relations with local people and visitors; guiding in museums and at sites; and, in educational activities. Members of the Laity Associations described above include inhabitants of the nearby communities. ICOMOS considers that the involvement of local communities and other associated communities and individuals is exemplary.

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ICOMOS considers that the management system for the overall serial property is appropriate, well-coordinated and resourced, and implemented effectively.

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## 6 Monitoring

A monitoring system is set out in the nomination dossier covering indicators, frequency and location of records for all property components and their buffer zones. This includes inspection of wooden and stone elements, landscape attributes and firefighting and safety systems and

equipment. The collection of data is supported by data management systems, and administrative responsibilities. There are also regular updates of the number of inhabitants and visitors.

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ICOMOS considers that the monitoring system is appropriate for the nominated serial property.

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## 7 Conclusions

Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea are important and distinctive. The continuing spiritual traditions and historical depth of the Buddhist monasteries found throughout Korea are an important cultural heritage. The primary challenge for the State Party is to formulate a nomination strategy that can enable them to be appropriately represented in the World Heritage List.

The seven selected components are all Buddhist monastery/temple complexes of great age and continuity. They are well-conserved, well-protected and well-managed, maintain their key architectural elements, spatial arrangements, landscape settings and living spiritual practices. The State Party considers that the nominated temples demonstrate typical aspects of the architectural layout of the Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries, such as the arrangement of buildings within the natural topography, the spatial configuration of the 'madang' (open yard), surrounded by four buildings (Buddha Hall, pavilion, lecture hall and dormitory). These typical arrangements assist in expressing the specific intangible and historical aspects of Korean Buddhism: the long time-depth, continuity and survival of the mountain monasteries; the ways in which the historical legacies are reflected in temple management; continuing traditions such as the daily routines; systems of education of monks; self-reliance of the monastic communities; and the specific accommodations of both Seon meditative practices and doctrinal study.

ICOMOS considers that comparative analysis of other World Heritage properties in east Asia supports the potential for Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries to be included in the World Heritage List. ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the individual sites that comprise the series has been demonstrated. However, ICOMOS does not consider that the selection of all of the proposed components is adequately justified. Indeed, Bongjeongsa has a smaller scale than the other six components and cannot be considered to be a 'comprehensive monastery'. In terms of their historical significance, Bongjeongsa, Magoksa, and Seonamsa are weaker. Therefore, while the integrity of the individual components has been demonstrated, ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the whole series can only be met for four of the seven nominated components.

ICOMOS notes that many Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries have retained their tangible/architectural and intangible monastic traditions through a long historical

span, and that they provide a testimony of these Buddhist cultural traditions. ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) has been demonstrated for four of the seven nominated components; and due to the nature of the evidence and analysis provided by the State Party, criterion (iv) has not been demonstrated.

Accordingly, ICOMOS considers that the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated serial property is demonstrated for four of the nominated components: Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa, and Daeheungsa. ICOMOS considers that the remaining nominated sites (Bongjeongsa, Magoksa and Seonamsa) should be excluded from the series.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated components of the property and of their buffer zones are adequate. ICOMOS considers that the management system for the overall serial property is well-coordinated and resourced, and implemented effectively; and that the monitoring system is appropriate.

ICOMOS considers that the main threat to the property is forest fire; and that tourism growth could create pressures in the future. ICOMOS considers that all new building construction projects within the temple complexes could have a potential impact on the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated series and should be communicated to the World Heritage Centre in line with paragraph 172 of *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

## 8 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that four of the seven components forming the nominated series of Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea, Republic of Korea, namely Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa, and Daeheungsa, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criterion (iii)**.

### Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

#### Brief synthesis

Sansa are Buddhist mountain monasteries located throughout the Korean Peninsula. Four temples – Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa and Daeheungsa – established in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries represent these ancient and continuing centres of spiritual practice. The four temples have historical associations with different schools of Buddhist thought and contain many individually notable historic structures, objects and documents, shrines and halls. The specific intangible and historical aspects of Korean Buddhism are based on the time-depth and continuity of the mountain monasteries, and the traditions of temple management, education of monks, Seon meditative practices and doctrinal study. The spatial arrangements within the monasteries reflect these

characteristics, as well as the requirements for the self-reliance of monastic communities. They commonly include one or more ‘madang’ (open yard), flanked on four sides by structures (Buddha Hall, pavilion, lecture hall and dormitory), and natural mountain settings. The mountain monasteries have survived to the present as living centres of faith and daily practice despite centuries of suppression during the Joseon Dynasty, and the impacts of Japanese invasion in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Criterion (iii):** Buddhism has a long history that has traversed a number of historical eras in the Korean Peninsula. The four mountain monasteries – Tongdosa, Buseoksa, Beopjusa and Daeheungsa – offer a distinctively Korean instantiation of Buddhist monastic culture from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. These mountain monasteries are sacred places and provide an exceptional testimony to their long and continuing traditions of Buddhist spiritual practice.

#### Integrity

Together the four temples contain the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of Korean Buddhist mountain monasteries, including their mountain settings, well-preserved buildings for religious practice and daily living, worship halls and shrines, meditation areas, monastic academy spaces and dormitories for monks. Few pressures threaten the components and they are intact, free of major losses and alterations during the modern period, and retain their original functions, despite changes through history.

#### Authenticity

The authenticity of the serial property is based on the long and continuing uses of the components for Buddhist spiritual practices and rituals, and is based on their location and setting; traditions, techniques and management skills; and intangible heritage. The architectural elements have been carefully maintained according to principles of repair and restoration, using traditional construction techniques, although the functions of some buildings have changed to support the operations of the temples. The religious traditions and functions of the Buddhist temples maintain a high degree of authenticity.

#### Management and protection requirements

The four temples are designated as Historic Sites under the Cultural Heritage Protection Act; and under City/Provincial Government Cultural Heritage Protection Ordinances. Modern constructions to facilitate continuing use and developments around the temples are strictly controlled. Each of the four temples is also protected by the Korean Traditional Temples Preservation and Support Act

Cultural Heritage Zones and Historical and Cultural Environment Protection Zones established by the Cultural Heritage Protection Act are in place for each of the components and their buffer zones. The Cultural Heritage Protection Act applies within areas of 500-metres of the

outer boundary of each Cultural Heritage Zone. Heritage Impact Assessments are prepared within the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act. Each temple has various designated elements (including artworks, relics and architecture) at the national or provincial level.

The 'Conservation and Management Plan for Sansa, Buddhist Monasteries in Korea' is in place, and the management system and conservation strategy will be overseen by 'Sansa Conservation and Management', with representation from religious and government authorities. Staff are provided for administration, conservation management, monitoring, research and promotion, as well as the monks, temple management staff, cultural heritage management staff and cultural tourism guides.

Each monastery is under the responsibility of a chief abbot. The Cultural Affairs Department of the Administrative Headquarters of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism is responsible for the management of cultural heritage, and the development and implementation of related projects. The Laity Association of each temple participates in volunteer work to support Buddhist practices, maintaining the temple landscapes and cleaning the temples. Visitor infrastructure is provided at each temple.

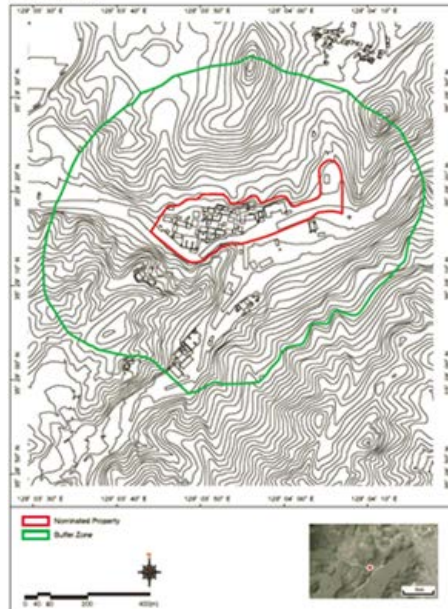
The Cultural Heritage Administration formulates comprehensive 5-year plans for the conservation and management of the temples in consultation with provincial governments. There is a Cultural Heritage Maintenance Plans in place for Buseoksa Temple, and plans for the remaining components will be established in 2018-2020.

#### **Additional recommendations**

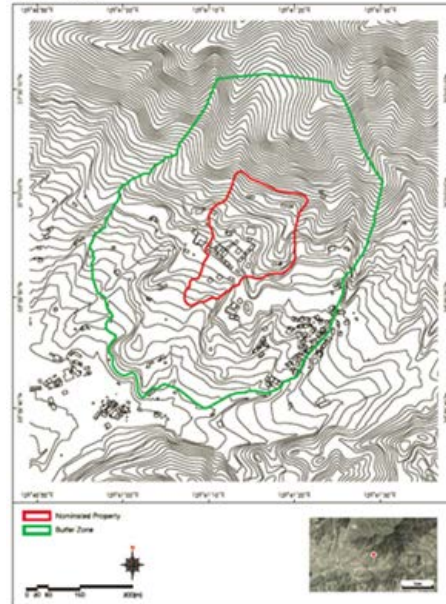
ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Developing planning measures for the existing 'non-cultural heritage elements' within the temples, providing guidance about new construction, renovation and renewal, and specifying approval procedures,
- b) Establishing Cultural Heritage Maintenance Plans for Tongdosa, Beopjusa and Daeheungsa temples,
- c) Developing measures to mitigate future visitor pressures (particularly in peak periods) in order to maintain an appropriate atmosphere within the temples,
- d) Ensuring that all new construction projects within the temple complexes (including those mentioned in this evaluation report) that could impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the series are communicated to the World Heritage Centre in line with paragraph 172 of *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*;

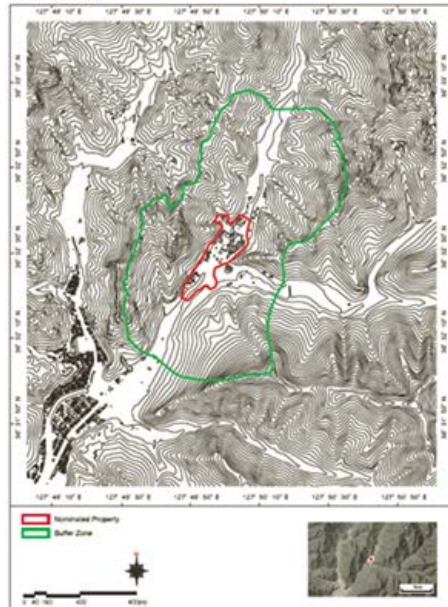
Tongdosa Temple



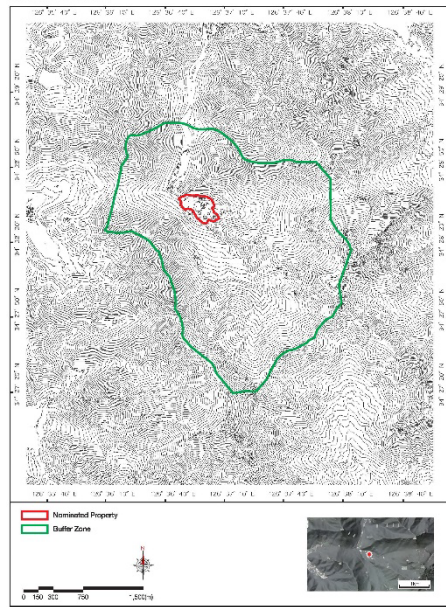
Buseoksa Temple



Beopjusa Temple



Daeheungsa Temple



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated properties





Beopjusa Temple



Buseoksa Temple